

CLAIMS:

1. A maintenance method for an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge adapted to apply processing fluid onto photographic media,
5 the method comprising the steps of:

moving a face of an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge into contact with a web of a cleaning device, said web extending between a supply roller and a take-up roller; and

10 advancing the web while the face of the applicator nozzle is in contact with the web to constantly introduce a clean portion of the web on the face of the applicator nozzle and clean the face of the applicator nozzle.

2. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further step of: moving the face of the applicator nozzle away from said web and to an operating
15 position where said applicator nozzle is adapted to apply processing fluid onto a surface of photographic media.

3. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further steps of: moving the face of the applicator nozzle away from said web;
20 moving the face of the applicator nozzle back into contact with said web; and

advancing the web in a direction from the supply roller to the take-up roller to continue cleaning the face of the applicator nozzle.

25 4. A method according to claim 1, comprising the further steps of: moving the cleaned applicator nozzle into contact with a capping web of a capping device, said capping web comprising a guiding layer and a sealing layer; and

30 sealing the face of said applicator nozzle with the sealing layer on said web.

5. A method according to claim 3, comprising the further step of:

moving the face of the applicator nozzle away from said web and to an operating position where said applicator nozzle is adapted to apply processing fluid onto a surface of photographic media.

5 6. A method of cleaning an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge, the method comprising the steps of:

 moving an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge into contact with a web; and

 advancing the web while the applicator nozzle is in contact with
10 the web to constantly introduce a clean portion of the web on the applicator nozzle and clean the applicator nozzle.

 7. A maintenance device for an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge, the maintenance device comprising:

15 a cleaning web supply reel operationally associated with a spring member that is adapted to apply a resistance torque on the supply reel;

 a cleaning web take-up reel operationally associated with a one-way clutch; and

 a cleaning web adapted to travel from the cleaning web supply reel
20 to the cleaning web take-up reel, such that during a cleaning cycle an applicator nozzle to be cleaned is brought into contact with said cleaning web while the cleaning web is advanced in a direction from said cleaning web supply reel to said cleaning web take-up reel;

 wherein:

25 during said cleaning cycle said one-way clutch permits a rotation of the cleaning web take-up reel in a winding direction to wind the cleaning web which is soiled as a result of contact with said applicator nozzle on said cleaning web take-up reel, and prevents a rotation of the cleaning web take-up reel having the soiled cleaning web thereon in an unwinding direction; and

30 said spring member and one-way clutch keeps at least a span of the cleaning web which contacts the face of said applicator nozzle at a minimum tension during said cleaning cycle.

8. A maintenance device according to claim 7, further comprising a capping device, said capping device including a capping web supply reel, a capping web take-up reel and a capping web adapted to travel from said capping web supply reel to said capping web take-up reel, such that after said cleaning cycle, said applicator nozzle is adapted to contact said capping web to permit a sealing layer on said capping web to seal the face of the applicator nozzle.

9. A method of processing photographic media, the method comprising the steps of:

placing an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge in an operating position and applying processing fluid from the applicator nozzle onto an exposed photographic media to initiate development of images on the exposed photographic media;

moving a face of the applicator nozzle from said operating position to a cleaning position where the face of said applicator nozzle is into contact with a web of a cleaning device; and

advancing the web while the face of the applicator nozzle is in contact with the web to constantly introduce a clean portion of the web on the face of the applicator nozzle and clean the face of the applicator nozzle.

10. A method according to claim 9, comprising the further step of moving the cleaned applicator nozzle to a sealing location to seal the face of the applicator nozzle with a sealing layer.

11. A method of processing photographic media, the method comprising the steps of:

placing an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge in an operating position and applying processing fluid from the applicator nozzle onto an exposed photographic media to initiate development of images on the exposed photographic media, wherein a processing cycle is defined by at least one

application of processing fluid from said applicator nozzle to said photographic media;

scanning the photographic media as the images are developed to create a digital representation of the images;

5 at the end of said processing cycle, moving a face of the applicator nozzle from said operating position to a cleaning position where the face of said applicator nozzle is into contact with a cleaning web of a cleaning device, said web being adapted to travel from a supply member to a take-up member; and
 advancing the web in a direction from the supply member to the
10 take-up member while the face of the applicator nozzle is in contact with the web to constantly introduce a clean portion of the web on the face of the applicator nozzle and clean the face of the applicator nozzle.

 12. A method according to claim 11, comprising the further step
15 of:
 resuming said processing cycle by moving said applicator nozzle from said cleaning position to said operating position.

 13. A method according to claim 11, comprising the further step
20 of:
 moving said cleaned applicator nozzle from said cleaning position to a sealing position where a sealing layer is placed on the face of the applicator nozzle.

 14. A method according to claim 13, comprising the further step
25 of:
 moving said cleaned and sealed applicator nozzle to said operating position.

 15. A maintenance device for an applicator nozzle of a
30 development cartridge, the maintenance device comprising:

a cleaning mechanism comprising a cleaning web which is adapted to clean a face of an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge when the face of the applicator nozzle is brought into contact with said web; and

5 a capping mechanism comprising a capping web adapted to seal the face of the applicator nozzle when the applicator nozzle is brought into contact with said capping web.

10 16. A device according to claim 15, wherein said cleaning web and said capping web are located within an enclosure.

17. A device according to claim 15, wherein said cleaning mechanism comprises a cleaning web take-up reel and a cleaning web supply reel, such that the cleaning web is advanced in a direction from the cleaning web supply web to the cleaning web take-up reel when the face of the applicator nozzle
15 is in contact with said cleaning web.

18. A device according to claim 15, wherein said capping mechanism comprises a capping web supply reel and a capping web take-up reel.

20 19. A device according to claim 15, further comprising a backup pad mounted on an articulated rocker located behind a portion of the capping web which opposes the face of the applicator nozzle.

25 20. A device according to claim 15, wherein said capping web comprises a carrier layer which is adapted to advance and guide the capping web and a sealing layer which is conformable to the face of the applicator nozzle.

21. A maintenance device for an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge, the maintenance device comprising:
30 a cleaning mechanism adapted to clean a face of an applicator nozzle of a development cartridge; and

a capping mechanism adapted to seal the face of the applicator nozzle.

22. A device according to claim 21, wherein said capping
5 mechanism comprises a chamber adapted to receive a tip of the applicator nozzle therein, said chamber comprising a fluid reservoir adapted to maintain air within said chamber saturated.

23. A device according to claim 21, wherein said capping
10 mechanism comprises a blade adapted to be inserted into a slot of said applicator nozzle.